jake mc carthy

a personal opinion

Mark Lane's Case

[illegible] an attorney who [illegible] that if new evidence comes [illegible] convicted person ought to [illegible]. He says he has new [illegible] the case of James Earl [illegible]

[illegible] is Grace Walden. She [illegible] says she has seen the shooting [illegible] the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther [illegible] in Memphis in 1968. She [illegible] she was a roomer in the boarding house from which the fatal shot was fired. She says she saw the [illegible] come out of the bathroom [illegible] he had stationed himself for [illegible] ambush.

[illegible] said it wasn't James Earl [illegible]. Lane argues, she was [illegible] in an insane asylum where [illegible] he remained for the last 10 years [illegible] until Lane recently obtained her release. He says she subsequently [illegible] was examined by leading Los [illegible] psychiatrists who say "it is [illegible] she was never insane" and is in good condition today, even if she [illegible] was administered massive drug [illegible] for the first six years.

[illegible] is preparing to file a damage [illegible] said in St. Louis the other [illegible] because every law and regu[illegible] was violated" in her incar[illegible]ration.

As a matter of fact, he contends, the first notation in her records [illegible] that she was "to be held until [illegible] trial" of James Earl Ray, [illegible] January 1969, six months after [illegible] confinement, he said, the records show that she was "recommended for release. But the authorities somehow kept her for nine and [illegible] more years.

[illegible] reason appears to be that [illegible] describes the killer as a man [illegible] between 5-foot-8 and 5-foot-5, in his [illegible] or early 40s, tiny, slim, with [illegible] and pepper hair, Lane said. It [illegible] doesn't match the description of [illegible] who is 5-foot-11 and was 39 [illegible] old at the time.

[illegible] is the description she gives [illegible] is also the description she [illegible] minutes after the killing, [illegible] to Wayne Chastain, the [illegible] at the scene. Chastain [illegible] a Memphis lawyer. Lane, a [illegible]-based lawyer, has interviewed him.

[illegible] Ray was arrested, says [illegible] Grace Walden said "that's [illegible] man." Two days later, he [illegible] officers of the homicide squad came and took her to a [illegible] institution."

[illegible] Walden was staying in the [illegible] boarding house with a man named [illegible] Charlie Stephens. According to [illegible] that Lane played for me, the [illegible] government investigator of [illegible] said only recently that [illegible] is their only witness, as if [illegible] Walden didn't exist. He also [illegible] that Stephens was [illegible] intoxicated state" at the time [illegible] the slaying.

[illegible] are records, Lane says, [illegible] a taxicab driver refused [illegible] Stephens to a liquor store [illegible] minutes before the shooting [illegible], because Stephens was too [illegible] other problems, says Lane, [illegible] the description Stephens [illegible] of the killer matches the description of the cab driver, not

Buffs of conspiracy theories may wish to take note. A study of newspaper clippings at the time shows Stephens and the proprietor of the boarding house being quoted as to the appearance of the killer. The government declares that Stephens is its only witness, even if he was drunk. Grace Walden has never been acknowledged; instead, they put her away. Her description of the fugitive does not match Ray. Yet the clippings show that at the time immediately following the killing, the FBI was putting out a description which matched that of James Earl Ray. If a man was going to be "set up," that's one way to do it.

Mark Lane wants a new trial because he wants to raise some questions about such matters. One of them involves the gun and suitcase the assassin left behind.

Ray has contended he was a "fall guy" for a mysterious man named Raoul and someone else, probably a professional hit man who could sever Dr. King's spinal cord with a single shot. Ray was never a gunman.

Lane also contends that the bullet which struck Dr. King cannot be matched as coming from the gun that the killer conveniently left outside the boarding house as he made his escape. That gun bore Ray's fingerprints. Ray says Raoul had him purchase a gun for him and bring it to Memphis.

Even more curiously, while the killer was depositing this gun for authorities to find, he also thoughtfully left a suitcase of belongings which included, says Lane, a radio bearing the name of James Earl Ray. Despite this identification by name, Lane asserts, the FBI waited two weeks to announce that it was looking for James Earl Ray, and at first used one of the aliases Ray admits using while running contraband for Raoul. This was a different name from the one Ray used in registering at the boarding house.

The government explains the strange abandoning of evidence, Lane said, by suggesting that Ray wished to be known as the killer of Dr. King. "If he wanted the credit," says Lane, "why has he been denying it ever since? And if he was trying to escape in the white Mustang, why would he leave the gun and the suitcase on the street?"

The registration book from the boarding house was seized by the FBI immediately after the killing but has since disappeared, Lane also maintains. "Maybe there is some other information in that book," he said the other day.

And he charged that "the two-week delay in identifying Ray also gave him plenty of time to get out of the country." Ray maintains he was given money by the mysterious Raoul for his numerous trips running contraband. The government appears to be maintaining the facade that James Earl Ray was funded by some "bank robberies" committed by his two brothers.

One of the brothers, John Larry Ray, has been imprisoned since 1970, convicted of driving the getaway car in a bank robbery in St. Peters, Mo., two years after the killing of Dr. King. To some degree of embarrassment for the government, the man accused of actually robbing the bank was acquitted. Last month John Larry Ray's brief parole at Dismas House in St. Louis was rescinded on the curious ground that he was suspected of "lying" to the House subcommittee on assassinations recently when he denied involvement in a 1967 bank robbery.

After all these years, Lane suggests, the government is still trying to get around the existence of Raoul. Yet the Ray brothers have never been charged with bank robbery as such.

"The thing that screwed up the government," Lane said, "is that Canadian authorities tracked down James Earl Ray. Somebody wanted to give him plenty of time and money to get away. The government never wanted a trial, and the case would have rested if Ray had remained in hiding."

But Lane has plans to keep it alive, and that is the subject for next time.